

Message Text

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TO USINT HAVANA

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E.O. 11652:N/A

TAGS: MASS, XA, CU

SUBJECT: QUESTIONS PERTAINING TO CUBA AT NOON BRIEFING

1. GIVEN BELOW IS TRANSCRIPT OF QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS
DEALING WITH CUBA AT NOON BRIEFING DECEMBER 1:

2. QUOTE: Q: EVANS AND NOVAK REPORTED THAT AMBASSADOR YOUNG
HAS TOLD THEM THAT CASTRO HAS REPEATEDLY SAID THAT THE US
HAS ALWAYS UNDERESTIMATED THE SIZE OF THE CUBAN MILITARY
FORCES IN AFRICA, WHICH WAS CLOSER TO FIFTY-FIVE THOUSAND;
AND MY QUESTION IS: DID AMBASSADOR YOUNG EVER TELL THIS TO
THE STATE DEPARTMENT? IF NOT, WHY NOT? AND, IF SO, WHY
DIDN'T YOU TELL US?

A: FIRST OF ALL, INSOFAR AS WHAT VARIOUS PEOPLE HAVE TOLD
US, I'M GOING TO HAVE TO GO INTO THE SAME POSTURE ON THAT
AS I WAS EARLIER ON THE STORIES IN QUESTION.

LET ME SAY SOMETHING ABOUT THE CUBAN PRESENCE. THE MAIN
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ISSUE IN ANY CASE IS THE ROLE THE CUBAN MILITARY IS PLAYING
IN AFRICA. WHATEVER THE CUBAN DEPLOYMENT MAY HAVE BEEN
THERE IS NO QUESTION THAT THERE HAS BEEN SOME RECENT IN-
CREASE IN THAT DEPLOYMENT. AS WE VIEW IT, THE UNDISPUTED

FACT IS THAT NEARLY A QUARTER OF CUBA'S ARMED FORCES ARE
DEPLOYED IN AFRICA AT PRESENT. WHAT THE INCREASE OVER

THE PAST FEW MONTHS SAYS ABOUT CUBAN INTENTIONS IN AFRICA IS DISTURBING AND CANNOT BUT HAVE AN IMPACT ON US-CUBAN RELATIONS.

I'M NOT PREPARED TO COMMENT ON WHETHER THERE WAS SOMETHING ELSE. THE FIGURES I'VE GIVEN FROM HERE HAVE BEEN THE FIGURES -- AS A MATTER OF FACT, THEY'VE BEEN GIVEN SINCE THIS ADMINISTRATION HAS BEEN IN -- ON WHICH WE HAD THE BEST ESTIMATE FROM THE VARIOUS SOURCES FROM WHOM WE GET SUCH ESTIMATES.

Q: OK. IF I COULD JUST FOLLOW THAT UP WITH TWO QUICK ONES. NO. 1, THIS IS A SOURCE WHICH IS FAIRLY AUTHORITATIVE --AMBASSADOR YOUNG QUOTING FIDEL CASTRO, WHO'S APPARENTLY PRETTY AUTHORITATIVE INsofar AS THE CUBAN OPERATION.

DO YOU FEEL THAT EITHER AMBASSADOR YOUNG OR PREMIER CASTRO IS IN ERROR ON THIS 50,000 FIGURE?

A: I'M REALLY NOT IN A POSITION, LES, TO ANALYZE THOSE STATEMENTS, AND QUITE LITERALLY I'M NOT.

Q: HODDING, A RELATED QUESTION HERE ON THE FIGURES. THERE HAD BEEN OTHER REPORTS - I HAVE HEARD FROM COLLEAGUES, AND I NEVER SAW THEM MYSELF - THAT THE CUBANS HAD SAID THAT THE UNITED STATES WAS GREATLY UNDERESTIMATING THE UNCLASSIFIED

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NUMBERS OF ITS FORCES IN ANGOLA. AND I WOULD LIKE TO ASK THE SPECIFIC QUESTION, HAS THE UNITED STATES RECEIVED FROM ANY SOURCE THAT IT REGARDS AS AUTHORITATIVE OR SEMI-AUTHORITATIVE ANY FIGURE RANGING UP INTO THE 30S, 40S OR 50 THOUSANDS ON CUBAN FORCES IN ANGOLA? BECAUSE IF IT HAS, AND IF THOSE CLAIMS HAVE ANY VALIDITY, THEN THE WHOLE PATTERN OF US STATEMENTS HERE HAVE NO VALIDITY.

IN OTHER WORDS, IF THE FIGURE HAS BEEN GOING DOWN AND NOT UP, THEN THE US CONTENTION IS NOT VALID.

A: THE BEST INFORMATION WE HAVE FROM ALL SOURCES IS THAT THE DEPLOYMENT OF CUBAN TROOPS OVER THE PAST SEVERAL WEEKS AND/OR MONTHS - AND I'M NOT SURE EXTENDING BACK EXACTLY HOW FAR - HAS GONE UP.

Q: THAT COULD BE POSSIBLE, AND IT COULD HAVE BEEN MUCH HIGHER AT SOME PREVIOUS POINT.

A: MURREY, THE ONLY FIGURES I'VE HAD SINCE WE'VE BEEN HERE HAVE BEEN THE FIGURES THAT I'VE GIVEN YOU. FRANKLY, I AM

NOT IN A POSITION TO DEAL WITH WHAT THE CUBAN FIGURES MAY HAVE BEEN A YEAR AGO OR A YEAR-AND-A-HALF AGO.

Q: THAT WOULD BE QUITE RELEVANT, FRANKLY, IF THAT WERE THE CASE.

A: AND I UNDERSTAND THAT. AND I UNDERSTAND THE QUESTION. I'M TELLING YOU WHAT I HAVE, AS FAR AS THE INFORMATION THAT I HAVE HAD HERE TO USE.

Q: HODDING, THE SECRETARY OF STATE IS MEETING WITH TWO CONGRESSMEN WHO ARE GOING TO CUBA. HAS HE ASKED THEM TO EXPRESS THIS CONCERN ABOUT THE CUBAN MILITARY PRESENCE?

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A: I DON'T KNOW IF THAT'S GOING TO COME UP. THIS MEETING WITH THE CONGRESSMEN WAS REQUESTED BY THEM. IT'S GOING TO BE A RATHER BRIEF DISCUSSION, AS I UNDERSTAND. IT MAY BE OVER NOW. IT WAS AT 12:15. IT WAS ANTICIPATED TO BE ABOUT A TEN-MINUTE MEETING.

Q: SO HE IS NOT GOING TO ASK THEM, AS FAR AS YOU KNOW?

A: I DO NOT KNOW THE GIST OF THAT CONVERSATION AT THIS POINT, AND I DON'T KNOW HOW IT WOULD HAVE GONE BECAUSE IT DIDN'T START UNTIL AFTER I CAME DOWN HERE.

Q: BEFORE WE LEAVE THE CUBAN QUESTION, I WISH YOU WOULD TAKE THE QUESTION BECAUSE I REGARD IT AS COMPLETELY FUNDAMENTAL TO THIS ENTIRE DISCUSSION AS TO WHETHER THE UNITED STATES RECEIVED ESTIMATES WHICH IT REGARDS AS HOLDING ANY VALIDITY, OR POSSIBLE VALIDITY, THAT THE CUBAN FORCES AT ANY TIME IN ANGOLA RANGED UP TO 30-, 40- OR 50,000.

A: MURREY, LET ME MAKE SURE ON THAT. I'M GOING TO TAKE THE QUESTION. LET ME MAKE SURE WE HAVE IT PHRASED IN A WAY WE BOTH UNDERSTAND. ARE YOU TALKING NOW ABOUT ALLEGATIONS - BECAUSE THERE HAVE BEEN A NUMBER PUBLISHED SINCE I'VE BEEN IN HERE - FROM VARIOUS SOURCES ON THAT SUBJECT, OR ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT FROM A SOURCE THAT WE WOULD OTHERWISE REGARD AS BEING PRETTY RELIABLE?

Q: WELL, IT SEEMS TO ME THAT IF YOU RECEIVE THEM FROM A CUBAN SOURCE - WHETHER YOU REGARD THAT AS RELIABLE, THAT WOULD BE EXTREMELY SIGNIFICANT TO KNOW, EVEN THOUGH YOU MIGHT NOT REGARD THAT AS RELIABLE.

A: OK. THAT'S ALL I'M TRYING TO PIN DOWN. YOU ARE
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DEALING SPECIFICALLY WITH CUBAN OR OTHER SOURCES CLOSE TO THAT.

Q: ONE OF THE POINTS HERE, IF I MAY JUST ADD TO THAT, IS THAT OTHER GOVERNMENTS FRIENDLY TO US HAVE FOR THE LAST SIX OR SEVEN MONTHS BEEN REPORTING FIGURES THAT GREATLY EXCEED OUR OWN.

A: I'M NOT PREPARED TO ACCEPT THAT. I'VE SEEN ALLEGATIONS ABOUT CUBAN PRESENCE IN OTHER PLACES. I RECALL SOME IN COUNTRIES NEIGHBORING ANGOLA AND OTHERS QUITE A WAYS AWAY. BUT ANGOLA, I DON'T KNOW. IF YOU CITE THEM TO ME MAYBE I CAN --

Q: ONE REASON FOR PRESSING THIS ISSUE IS, FRANKLY, BECAUSE YOU NEVER DID ANSWER A BASIC QUESTION A COUPLE OF WEEKS AGO, WHICH WAS NAMELY, WHEN THE UNITED STATES CAME OUT WITH A NEW, HIGH FIGURE, HAD IT CHANGED ITS METHOD OF COMPUTING THE NUMBERS OF CUBANS IN AFRICA?

A: I THINK THE ANSWER TO THAT IS NO.

Q: IT HAS NOT CHANGED.

A: I BELIEVE THAT THE EVALUATIONS - AND NOW UPON REFLECTION AND LOOKING AT THE WAY THE INFORMATION CAME - COME FROM ROUGHLY THE SAME KIND OF ACCOUNTING PROCEDURES THAT WE HAVE USED.

Q: HODDING, CAN YOU SPELL OUT THE CUBAN INTENTIONS, I MEAN WHICH THE DEPARTMENT FINDS DISTURBING IN AFRICA?

A: WE HAVE ALREADY SUGGESTED THAT THE EXPANSION OF A MILITARY PRESENCE BY EXTERNAL FORCES IN AFRICA IS NOT USEFUL TO THE CAUSE OF EITHER OVERALL PEACE IN THAT UNCLASSIFIED

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AREA OR STABILITY, AND THAT WE CONTINUE TO BELIEVE THAT THE PROBLEMS OF AFRICA SHOULD BE SOLVED BY THE FORCES INDIGENOUS TO IT.

Q: WHAT FIGURE DOES THE DEPARTMENT CARRY FOR THE OVERALL TOTAL OF CUBA'S ARMED FORCES?

A: THAT ONE I'LL HAVE TO GET YOU. IT WOULD HAVE QOARE
ROUGHLY IN THE 100,000 CATEGORY TO COME UP WITH A QUARTER
ON THIS ONE, BUT LET ME GET THAT FIGURE FOR YOU.

Q: I'M TRYING TO FIGURE OUT WHAT POINT OF COMPARISON WE'RE
USING HERE WHEN YOU SAY A QUARTER?

A: YES, I SAID ROUGHLY A QUARTER, THAT'S RIGHT. LET ME
TAKE THAT BECAUSE THAT WOULD BE MY EXTRAPOLATION AND I
BELIEVE - AND THE REASON I DON'T JUMP ON THIS IS - I SAW
THE FIGURE, AND WHETHER IT IS 100 OR 125, I CAN'T RECALL.

Q: COULD YOU ALSO TAKE THE QUESTION IF YOU DON'T HAVE THE
ANSWER, AS TO WHETHER THIS SUBJECT HAS BEEN RAISED WITH
THE SOVIETS, EITHER HERE OR IN -

A: THE CUBAN PRESENCE?

Q: YES.

A: I WILL TAKE THE QUESTION. UNQUOTE.

3. FOLLOWING ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS TAKEN AT DECEMBER 1
NOON BRIEFING WERE POSTED DECEMBER 2:

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QUOTE: Q: HAS THE UNITED STATES RECEIVED FROM ANY SOURCE
THAT IT REGARDS AS AUTHORITATIVE OR SEMI-AUTHORITATIVE
ANY FIGURE RANGING UP INTO THE 30S, 40S OR 50 THOUSANDS
ON CUBAN FORCES IN ANGOLA?

A: NO PRECISE ANSWER CAN BE GIVEN BECAUSE THIS QUESTION
DEALS WITH INTELLIGENCE SOURCES AND METHODS WHICH WE ARE
UNABLE TO DISCUSS. WE CAN TELL YOU, HOWEVER, THAT THE
INTELLIGENCE COMMUNITY HAS RECEIVED AND CONTINUES TO
RECEIVE WIDELY VARYING ESTIMATES OF CUBAN STRENGTH IN
AFRICA, MANY OF THEM COMING FROM SOURCES THAT ARE WORTHY
OF SERIOUS CONSIDERATION. SOME HAVE BEEN HIGHER AND OTHERS
LOWER THAN THE ESTIMATES WE HAVE GIVEN OUT AT VARIOUS
TIMES.

Q: WHAT FIGURE DOES THE DEPARTMENT CARRY FOR THE OVERALL
TOTAL OF CUBA'S ARMED FORCES?

A: CUBA'S REGULAR ARMED FORCES ARE ESTIMATED AT AROUND
100,000. THERE IS ALSO A READY RESERVE FORCE OF AROUND
60,000 WHICH COULD BE CALLED UP ON VERY SHORT NOTICE.
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